Lawsuits Between Christians

It is difficult for Christians to understand why disputes between believers sometimes end up in court. In the New Testament, Paul clearly instructed the Corinthians, “If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord’s people?” (1 Corinthians 6:1).

The logic is simple: Christians belong to the same family of God. We are brothers and sisters in Christ, sharing one Spirit and one hope. To take one another before unbelieving judges is to deny this unity and to expose the weakness of our fellowship to the world.

Of course, conflicts are unavoidable as long as we live in this world. Even among believers, misunderstandings, differences in opinion, and offenses will occur. But the biblical way is to settle these matters within the church, seeking reconciliation through the wisdom of mature believers rather than through secular courts.

□□ Paul’s Teaching on Handling Disputes □□□□□□□□

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Paul’s Teaching on Handling Disputes

Paul reminded the Corinthians that one day believers will judge the world—and even angels. If that is our future role, surely we should be able to resolve the small matters of this life within the community of faith.

He rebuked them sharply: “I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between

believers? But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!” (1 Corinthians 6:5–6).

Paul went even further, saying it would be better to be wronged or cheated than to damage the witness of the gospel by public lawsuits between Christians. This teaching runs against our human instinct for self-defense and justice, but it reflects the humility and self-sacrifice to which Christ calls us.

Why This Teaching Is Difficult

In modern society, legal systems are designed to protect rights and ensure fairness. It feels natural to turn to them when we are wronged. But Paul challenges us to think differently: for the sake of Christ’s name and the unity of His body, we may need to absorb personal loss.

This does not mean that wrongdoing should be ignored or that victims should be silenced. Rather, it means that the church should take seriously its responsibility to mediate disputes and uphold justice among its members.

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When Legal Action May Be Necessary

There are situations where involving the legal system may be unavoidable—such as cases of criminal activity, abuse, or situations

where the safety of individuals is at stake. In such cases, reporting to the proper authorities is not only lawful but also a moral responsibility. Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 6 does not forbid this; rather, it addresses personal disputes and civil matters that could be resolved within the fellowship.

When the issue involves protecting the vulnerable or preventing further harm, seeking help from law enforcement or the courts may be necessary. However, even then, Christians should seek to maintain an attitude of grace, avoiding revenge, and leaving judgment to God while pursuing justice in the proper way.

Pursuing Reconciliation Above All

The heart of Paul’s instruction is that believers should prioritize reconciliation over winning a case. The gospel is about God reconciling us to Himself through Christ, and we are called to reflect that same spirit toward one another.

When conflicts arise, the first step should be direct communication, followed by mediation within the church if needed. Legal action should be the last resort, not the first impulse. This way, the church can show the world that Christ’s love is stronger than human disputes.